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22 BOSTON STATE ST

Records
of the
Committee
on
Lawrence Common

Lawrence Common

The Lawrence Common was originally laid out by the Essex Company in March 1846. in connection with the first plan of Streets for the Town. Its location was somewhat influenced by the desire to include within its limits the large Oak tree near Common Street, the finest then standing in that vicinity. An attempt was made to include also several hickory trees near the present location of Amesbury Street, but it was found impossible to do so in conformity with what was deemed for other reasons the best location. The main object was to have a public square in the very centre of what might hereafter be a dense population, easily accessible, & large enough for the assembling of great crowds on festival days. For this reason it seemed best to mark it out and set it apart at once, before a foot of land had been sold by the Essex Company, & thus to secure it for the benefit of the infant town before its pecuniary value should make the temptation to retain it for sale, too strong for the Company or its future managers to resist.

The attention of the first settlers in the town was early called to the Common, its use & embellishment. The first public action in relation to it was taken in 1848. At a meeting of the Inhabitants of the town held on Monday April 17th of that year, pursuant to a warrant dated April 8th in which was inserted the following article.

Art. 3. To see if the Town will accept the land set apart by the Essex Company for a Common, and act thereon.

It was voted. to choose a Committee of five to confer with the Essex Company as to the conditions upon which

they will deed the Common to the Town, and to report to the Town at the earliest opportunity

Voted. that Sam. H. Stevens
Ivan Stevens
Abiel Stevens J.
M. D. Ross
A. D. Blanchard

do constitute this Committee.

At an adjournment of this meeting, held on the following day, the Essex Company desiring time to draw up a careful statement in answer to the vote of the Town, this committee reported "that the Essex Company were not prepared to make any definite proposals of terms of deed."

Thereupon the report of the Committee was accepted and they were discharged -

It was then Voted - that a Committee be chosen to confer with the Essex Company in order to see upon what terms they will convey the Common to the Town, and that this Committee report at some future meeting those terms

Voted - that Daniel Saunders Jr.
James D. Merrick
S. H. Stevens
Wm. A. Goodwin
Geo. W. Sanborn

do constitute this Committee -

At a meeting called & held on Saturday July 1st 1848 the Committee made their report, stating that the Essex Company were ready to give to the Inhabitants of the Town the land called the "Common" as a free gift inserting in the deed of conveyance the following conditions to be observed by the Inhabitants in the enjoyment of the same;

"Provided, however, and this grant & conveyance is upon the conditions & subject to the restrictions limitations & provisions following, namely

First. The said parcel of land or Common shall be forever kept open as a place of public recreation and resort, for the Inhabitants & Residents of the said Town, and no buildings or erections of any description shall ever be placed thereon, excepting public fountains, statues and such shrubbery designed & placed thereon for ornamental purposes alone, as the Committee of management hereinafter provided for, shall approve.

Second. The said Inhabitants shall within one year from this date cause the said land or Common to be enclosed by a suitable and permanent fence, with suitable gates and other entrances, the style & construction of said fence, gates &c to be approved by the Committee of management hereinafter provided for.

Third - The said Inhabitants shall by vote at their annual Town Meeting or in some other legal manner, appropriate yearly for the term of Twenty years, a sum not less than three hundred dollars per annum, to be expended in the care, improvement & embellishment of the said Common, (exclusive of the first cost of the fence) under the direction and with the approval of the Committee to be appointed in pursuance of the following article.

Fourth The care, general direction and management of the said Common, so far as relates to the improvement and embellishment of the same, in the laying out of walks & paths, planting of trees & shrubs & ornamenting the same, shall be intrusted to a Committee which shall consist of the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen of said Town of Lawrence,

or the Mayor in case of the adoption of a city government at any time hereafter, and the principal Agents for the time being of the Essex Company, the Atlantic Cotton Mills & the Bay State Mills, who shall be residents of the said Town, and under whose direction all improvements or works for the ornamenting of said Common shall be made, and the moneys to be annually appropriated by the said Inhabitants as aforesaid shall be expended."

It was thereupon

Voted that the Report of the Committee on the Common be accepted & placed on the files of the Town, & the Committee be discharged.

At a meeting called and held on Saturday Sept 23d 1848 upon Article 2d of the Warrant.

To see if the Town will accept the Common upon the conditions stated in the Report of the Committee heretofore appointed to confer with the Essex Company upon the subject, and if so, to determine what appropriation the Town will make for the purpose of fencing, ornamenting & grading the Common for the Current year.

Voted. Not to accept the Common upon the conditions made by the Essex Company

The patriotic zeal & enlightened judgment manifested by certain ardent friends of the rights & independence of their fellow citizens, in this refusal of the proffered gift ~~of a Corporation~~ ~~[illegible]~~ (timeo Danaos et dona ferentes) were not generally appreciated as they expected, and at the adjournment of this meeting held on Saturday Oct 7 1848, it was

Voted That the vote passed Sept 23d 1848 in relation to the acceptance of the Common upon the conditions made by the Essex Company be now reconsidered.

Voted That the Common be accepted upon the conditions made by the Essex Company

& in conformity with this vote the Essex Company by deed bearing date October 21st AD 1848 conveyed the Common to the Inhabitants of Lawrence subject to the above conditions every one of which was intended by the Company, not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of the present & future residents in the place.

It may hereafter excite surprise that there could have been any hesitation in the acceptance of such a gift; but the surprise on this (& on some other points) may vanish when one reflects upon the heterogeneous social elements which are necessarily brought together in the first formation of an infant town like our own, growing with unexampled growth.

The Committee upon whom the care and management of the Common now devolved, in pursuance of the action thus taken by the Town & the Essex Company consisted of

David J. Clark	Chairman of the Selectmen
Chas. S. Storrow	Treasurer of Essex Company
Henry K. Oliver	Agent of Atlantic Cotton Mill.
M. D. Ross	Agent of Bay State Mills

This Committee after deciding upon the kind of fence most desirable to adopt for enclosing the Common, issued

a notice calling for proposals for its construction, and subsequently a contract for a wooden fence with chestnut posts & pine rails, was entered into with Leonard Stoddard, at the price of twenty three cents per running foot, to be completed in May 1849.

At the annual meeting of the Inhabitants of the Town, for the year 1849 the Finance Committee reported on the subject of appropriations for the Common as follows -

"The Fence to surround the Common will cost something over nine hundred dollars. In addition to this a moderate amount of grading will be requisite in order to place the fence at its proper level. It is also highly desirable to set out at once the belt of trees and to prepare paths as far as a moderate appropriation will allow. For all these purposes the Committee recommend an appropriation of one thousand five hundred dollars."

Thereupon it was

Voted - That the recommendation of the Committee be adopted.

The Committee for the year 1849 consists of

Levi Sprague -	Chairman of the Selectmen
Chas. S. Storrow,	Treasurer of Essex Company
Henry K. Oliver	Agent of Atlantic Cotton Mills
M. D. Ross	Agent of Bay State Mills

1849. The citizens of the town of Lawrence having voted that the chairman of the Selectmen of the town together with the resident Agents of the Essex Co. the Atlantic Mills and the Bay State Mills be a standing committee to superintend the improvements to be connected with the Common in said town.

Said Committee met March 20th 1849 at the office of the Atlantic Mills — viz —

Levi Sprague	Chairman of	Selectmen
Chas S Storrow	Agent of	Essex Co
H K Oliver	"	Atlantic Mills
M D Ross	"	Bay State Mills

The Committee was called to order by H K Oliver Esq and Chas S Storrow was elected chairman of the committee for the ensuing year and M D Ross Secretary

The Committee then agreed that it was expedient to proceed at once and plant two rows of Elm trees around the common, also to do as much gradings as would be necessary in order to place the trees in a proper order.

Some plans in reference to enclosing the Common with a fence having been partially matured during previous year by David J Clark Esq. Chairman of the Board of Selectmen for that year at the request of the other members of the committee it was resolved to forthwith mature and execute those plans

It was agreed by the committee that Messrs Morrow & Sprague should take charge of all business connected with fencing, grading, draining, with full power to make the necessary contracts and see that the work is properly executed

It was further agreed that Messrs Oliver & Ross should contract for lines, and attend to the execution of all business connected with setting them out &c,

A. D. Ross Sec'y

1849

May 3d The committee met this day at the office of the Atlantic Mills

It was agreed that the subcommittee on planting trees be authorized to plant two rows of Linden trees running from that corner of the common near the Congregational Church to the corner near the Episcopal Church.

It was further agreed that the committee on grading be should employ their men to dig the holes for the trees

It was also further agreed that permission be given to individuals of the town to plant trees on the common Some persons having expressed a wish to "plant a tree" the place for them to be designated by the sub committee on trees

W D Ross. Secy.

1851 The Committee for the year 1851 consists of
Artemas Parker Jr. Chairman, of the Board of Selectmen
Charles L Storrow, Treasurer of the Essex Co.
Henry W. Oliver, Agent of the Atlantic Cotton Mills
Sam Webber Jr., Supt. of the Bay State Mills

May 1st At the first Meeting, called at the Office of Chas L Storrow Esq. the Committee was organized by the choice of the following Officers for the ensuing year.
Charles L. Storrow .. Chairman
Sam Webber Jr .. Secretary

It was then

Voted, that a culvert be laid under the Mall on the north side of the Common, connecting with the drain now crossing the same, and serving to convey the surplus water from the north of Haverhill St. to the town sewer in Jackson St.

Voted to replace the trees which were maliciously destroyed during the last winter, by some persons unknown

Voted to expend such surplus funds as may be at the disposal of the Committee, in grading that portion of the Common immediately opposite the Town Hall.

Voted to procure an estimate from James K. Barker, C.E. of the cost of grading said portion

Voted to allow the town to cultivate a portion of the common to be designated on the Plan, for the use of the Poor farm.

Voted That Henry W. Oliver, & Ailenas Parker Jr be a sub-committee to attend to the replacing of trees, & all other matters of cultivation.

Voted That Charles S. Sparrow, and Sam'l Webber Jr, be a sub-committee to attend to all matters of drainage and grading

Adjourned

Sam'l Webber

Sec'y.

May 8th 1850 The Sub Committee on Drainage and grading Voted to Employ Mr Howe, the Supt of Streets, to grade that part of the Common immediately in front of the Town House and to place the earth removed on the diagonal line leading from the Unitarian Church to the S.W. corner of the Common, so as to form a path 20 ft wide, to begin at the N.E. corner, and extend across the low land as far as the earth would hold out.

Grading

Sam'l Webber

Sec'y of Com-

1850

Aug 19th Voted in Meeting of the Committee this day holden at the office of Chas. J. Stimson Esq Chairman, to grade that portion of the Common fronting on Lawrence Street and to appropriate the sum of $ 260.00 for that purpose.

Grading

Voted that the Sub-committee on grading be authorized to contract for the above grading, which was accordingly done and H. G. Howe, Superintendent of Streets was employed for that purpose.

Saml Webber
Secy. of Com.

1851 The Committee for the year 1851 consists of

Wm. P. Page Chairman of the Board of Selectmen

Charles S. Stevens Town Clerk

Henry K. Oliver Agent for Charitable Institutions

O. H. Perry Agent for Sup. State Aid

April 24th At a meeting held on the Common, all the members being present, the committee was organized by electing the officers

Chas S. Stevens Chairman

O. H. Perry Secretary

Voted that C. S. Stevens and Wm. P. Page be a subcommittee on grading

Voted that H. K. Oliver and O. H. Perry be a subcommittee on trees

Voted that the subcommittee on grading be authorized to contract for $200 for grading

Voted that the subcommittee on trees be authorized to contract for $100 for trees and shrubs

O. H. Perry

Secy. pro tem

1851

May 13th The Committee, under the appointment of the Chairman on the Common (not) the members present, to take into consideration such additional grading of the Common as could be accomplished without further outlay of funds than the interest be referred to the Sub-Committee on grading, and they be authorized to take such action as they think proper ——

O. D. Perry
Secy pro tem

1852. The Committee [illegible] 1852 consisting of
Mr. R. Page (Chairman of the Board of Selectmen)
Chas. S. Stevens Treas. of Essex Co.
Henry K. Clarke Agent Atlantic Coast [illegible]
C. H. Perry Agent Bay State [illegible]

May 5th at a meeting of the Committee for Soldiers'
Grave was chosen

Chas. S. Stevens Chairman
C. H. Perry Secy

Voted that Mr. R. Page be a committee
to procure [illegible]

Voted that C. H. Perry be authorized to procure [illegible]

Voted that C. S. Stevens & R. Page be a committee
on Finance

Attested

C. H. Perry
Secy. Com.

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